Introduction
Contemporary policing and non-warranted volunteering

Andrew Millie and Helen Wells

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Research on policing has tended to focus on paid and warranted officers, often overlooking the large and, in many jurisdictions, expanding army of volunteers working with or for the police. Where there has been research on police volunteering this has focused mainly on warranted auxiliaries, reserves or special constables. This Special Issue of *Policing and Society* contains three articles that add to our knowledge and understanding of non-warranted volunteering, and of the lived experiences of those who volunteer. In this introduction we provide some context for these three articles. The articles draw on experiences within England and Wales, yet they are relevant to other jurisdictions that make use of volunteers. For instance, volunteers have been utilised in the US in efforts to support community policing, improve police-community relations, and perform specific roles that the police find difficult to do (Ren *et al*. 2006, Ayling 2007, Wolf *et al*. 2016, Albrecht 2017). Volunteers are utilised elsewhere. For instance, in Canada (Parent 2017), South Africa (Bezuidenhout 2017) and Hungary (Kardos and Szoke 2017) volunteers are available to support the main body of regular paid officers, although these are mainly warranted auxiliaries or reserves.

The first article is by Helen Wells and Matthew Millings in which they scrutinise the appeal of Community Speedwatch, where volunteers are dressed in florescent jackets and deployed to measure the speed of passing motorists. By drawing on interviews with Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) and Chief Constables, the article draws attention to the potential differences in the motivations of volunteers and those who 'employ' them. Second is an article by Matthew Callender, Melissa Pepper, Kathryn Cahalin and Iain Britton that presents findings from the first national survey of police volunteers in England and Wales. The article calls for new thinking in the strategic deployment of Police Support Volunteers, with particular focus on issues of recruitment, development, integration and support in order to sustain volunteers in the long term. The third article by Andrew Millie looks specifically at the lived reality of being a non-warranted Police Support Volunteer. By utilising participatory action research with volunteers, the article explores the various roles that Police Support Volunteers undertake, focusing on the experiences of volunteers and their relations with regular paid officers.

Background

According to Callender and colleagues in this issue, the paucity of research on police volunteers is reflective of the 'regular-centrism' of academic work on policing. Yet volunteers have been integral to policing for a very long time, most notably in England and Wales since the introduction of uniformed and warranted – but usually unpaid – special constables from the early nineteenth century onwards (Bullock and Millie 2018, Leon 2018). Contemporary police volunteering in England and Wales comes under the umbrella heading of 'Citizens in Policing', a National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) portfolio that includes

Volunteer Police Cadets (aged between 13 and 18), non-warranted Police Support Volunteers and warranted special constables. According to the Citizens in Policing website (n.d.):

> Citizens in Policing is the term used to describe the thousands of people across the UK who give up their time to support the police. The role of citizens in policing is vital – volunteers increase the capacity of our constabularies, bringing valuable skills and expertise to police teams, creating closer and more effective relationships with our communities. These people give up their free time to volunteer in a variety of policing roles for various reasons.

A significant strand of non-warranted civilian involvement in policing emerged in the US in the late 1960s with the development of Neighbourhood Watch (Washnis 1976), which then spread elsewhere. It has since expanded to encompass various Home Watch, Farm Watch or Business Watch schemes. As explained in Millie's contribution to this issue, these are examples of volunteering at a distance. Community members are not volunteering *for* the police but contribute to community safety through greater engagement and local surveillance, accountable through Neighbourhood Watch Associations (or similar). The focus for the articles included here is more *direct* volunteering with or for the police. There has been a push to broaden the use of such volunteers, to nurture what Crawford and Lister (2004) have labelled 'civilian policing'. In England and Wales those engaged in non-warranted volunteering have been badged as Police Support Volunteers (PSVs) (Bullock 2014, Millie 2016). They are part of an extended policing family (Crawford 2014) that includes warranted officers (both paid and voluntary), non-uniformed personnel and volunteers, as well as other state employed security and private security provision.

In England and Wales, the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act introduced by the New Labour government made it a statutory responsibility of a wide range of partner agencies to think about crime control in everything they do, in what has been seen as the criminalisation of social policy (see Crawford 1997). According to Simon (2007) such moves were part of a wider push to 'govern through crime', where crime and crime control became defining features of government policy. In the two decades that followed, the state police of England and Wales had greater involvement in wider areas of social policy (Millie 2013); yet at the same time there was greater awareness that the state could not singlehandedly assume responsibility for controlling crime. Alongside increased involvement of partners and volunteers, there were parallel moves towards the privatisation of some traditional police functions such as prison escorting (Millie 2013).

Significantly, the impetus for expanding the policing family by utilising partner agencies, private security companies and the country's citizens has come from both sides of the political spectrum. The use of volunteer labour was specifically promoted by the 2010–2015 coalition and post-2015 Conservative government under the 'Big Society' banner, which was a call for bottom-up community empowerment and local ownership of local issues. Citizens were exhorted to take greater responsibility for their own security and safety through a process of responsibilisation (Garland 1996) – as reflected by the 2011 Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, and as discussed in the contribution to this issue by Wells and Millings. The use of volunteers had also specific appeal during the time of austerity that followed the global financial crisis of 2008 (Millie 2013). Volunteers may be called upon to meet the challenges of reduced public-sector budgets; but whether these challenges are met successfully will depend, as Stenning and Shearing (2015, p. 7) have claimed, on the appetite for, and ability of more traditional police providers to take the 'fullest advantages of the

opportunities that a pluralised approach can offer'. They will also depend on the appetite of potential volunteers to adopt such roles in such circumstances.

It is possible that volunteers can offer police services specialist skills and experiences that are hard to come by among regular officers. With the increasing complexity of modern policing, for instance with greater dominance of cybercrime or transnational threats, it is appealing to think that volunteers may fill some of the gaps in knowledge and experience. Other volunteers can perform roles that were previously paid or that would not be performed any more if services had to pay for them (such as working on the front desk of police stations threatened with closure). Volunteers are also used in preventative roles and to gather data on offending, such as through Neighbourhood Watch and Community Speedwatch, thus providing a function that is not a sufficiently high priority on a 'threat, harm and risk' assessment to justify paid resource.

It is perhaps unsurprising that, in a context of austerity resulting in declining numbers of warranted police officers, the voluntary sector has been encouraged to explore ways of contributing to police and community safety objectives. However, whilst it seems clear that this expansion has created new opportunities for volunteers, we know relatively little about the extent they are filling gaps left by reductions in warranted police numbers, taking on new roles and expanding the police function, or co-producing policing alongside more traditional models. Furthermore, the assumed benefits of greater use of volunteers in a diversity of roles are largely un-evidenced. The Police Federation (2016) and police staff union (Unison 2014) have been concerned about 'mission creep'. Yet, direct job-substitution has been minimised in some constabularies through seeking union approval before advertising new voluntary roles – although this is not the case everywhere. There is the perennial question of whether volunteers are replacing paid staff, or whether they provide 'additionality' (Bullock 2017) – complementary value that it would not have been possible to provide otherwise. In short, having volunteers working with or for the police may be regarded as having the following benefits:

1. *Filling a gap*: According to Bullock (2017, p. 346) Police Support Volunteers have been characterised as a 'pragmatic response to economic reality'. At a time of austerity volunteers may be 'a somewhat effective means of compensating for the scarcity of police financial and workforce resources' (Ren *et al*. 2006, p. 465). The need to fill gaps is made more pressing when warranted officers are increasingly drawn away from local policing by global and cross-border threats.
2. *Expanding provision into new areas*: It is possible that the police service can draw on specific skills and experiences that volunteers have that regular officers do not routinely possess (particularly in relation to I.T. for example), thus expanding the police's reach and available expertise.
3. *Altruism*: According to Hieke (2018) and Millie in this issue, while it is possible that volunteers have self-oriented motivations relating to personal or career development, many also display other-oriented altruistic motivations for wanting to give something back to the community, which benefits both the community and the police service.
4. *Sharing the burden*: According to Ayling (2007, p. 74) there has been, 'a general trend, in western societies at least, towards governments requiring individuals to take more responsibility for their own and their society's security'. Such sharing (or re-assigning) of the burden through responsibilisation has meant citizens are encouraged to view their appropriate contribution to society as being more than just exercising

their democratic right, but also to 'work in co-production with partners and other state agencies to tackle problems' (Bullock and Leeney 2013, p. 199).

5. *Demonstrating community engagement*: Whilst there may be benefits in terms of recognised police tasks, there are other benefits in that police services and – in England and Wales – Police and Crime Commissioners are seen to engage with communities. There are perceived pay offs for public perception/community relations, but also questions as to whether being seen to engage is as useful as actual constructive engagement.

The debate will continue over the efficacy of using volunteers to fill gaps left by cuts to paid personnel. For many, it may be altogether more comfortable if volunteers are used only if additionality can be proven. Likewise, it may be a matter of perspective as to whether it is better to employ volunteers where there are definite benefits to recognised policing tasks, rather than just demonstrating that the police are seen to be doing something. As discussed in Wells and Millings' contribution, volunteers may be taken on more for their symbolism than for their value to the service.

That said, getting people involved, working 'with' rather than 'on' the community may be beneficial for police-community relations. It may also expand reassurance by improving public confidence and police legitimacy (Millie and Herrington 2005, Gravelle and Rogers 2010). This can be through direct involvement of community volunteers, and by responding to what matters most in those communities – as Wells and Millings note for Community Speedwatch in this issue. Yet such benefits are only possible so long as those that volunteer do not become disillusioned. The volunteer is, perhaps, envisaged as an ideal citizen giving their time for no financial gain, for the benefit of themselves, their communities and their police service. They are a resource that can be reached for (or indeed set aside), whether the driving concern is cost saving, wider engagement, shifting responsibility or the redistribution of resources. But this cannot be done in ignorance of what volunteers contribute, how they think, and what, perhaps, is in it for them.

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